

The Anthropological Trickster

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The works of Paul Radin (1883–1959) reveal a divergent line of thought in Boasian anthropology. His influential study *The Trickster: A Study in American Indian Mythology* (1956) is one of the true classics in the field of Native American studies. Presenting forty-nine stories as a cycle of Winnebago¹ trickster myths, this work of Radin's is highly suggestive. Trickster takes the part of an ambiguous creator and destroyer, giver and negator, cheater and cheated, subhuman and superhuman. "He possesses no values, moral or social, is at the mercy of his passions and appetites, yet through his actions all values come into being" (Radin 1956: xxiii).

The following, however, is not another discussion pertaining to this particular book, but a sketch of the very complex man behind it. The life and works of Paul Radin can, of course, not be fairly described in terms of such unpredictable traits as those of a trickster. However, as a highly independent researcher or, plainly speaking, an outsider within the Boasian paradigm of American anthropology, Radin's fluctuating theoretical and methodological contributions partake something of the mythological character. With Radin, anthropology and Native American studies found a creative, versatile, and imaginative mind, but also a frequently misunderstood and underestimated researcher. As with the constantly wandering Trickster whom he found so fascinating, Radin himself appears to have been on the

move throughout his lifetime. The trajectory of Paul Radinsky begins in Lodz, Russian Poland, in 1883.

Hardly one year old, his family took him on a long journey, the first of many to come. The United States became his new homeland, a country where also his older brothers Herman and Max were destined for successful careers. The line of Radin's life through time and space continues through school and high school to Columbia University in New York. After studying zoology long enough to write a thesis on the embryology of the shark, he turned up for lectures in history by James Harvey Robinson. Anthropology was just a hall away, but Radin never took shortcuts. Instead he went abroad, touring Europe between 1905 and 1907. In Berlin and Munich he came into contact with anthropology through such famous South and Middle American specialists as Karl von den Steinen, Paul Ehrenreich, and Eduard Seler. Back home, Radin took up his studies in anthropology under Franz Boas. Together with Alfred Kroeber, Clark Wissler, Edward Sapir, Robert Lowie, Frank Speck, and Alexander Goldenweiser, he took the famous course in statistics—the one that everybody took and nobody understood. Boas persuaded him to do fieldwork, and in 1908 he had already contacted the Winnebago Indians in Wisconsin and Nebraska.

Wisconsin and northwestern Illinois along the Rock River was the homeland of the Winnebago. As a result of treaties and land cessions between 1829 and 1837 about half of the tribe, mainly the southern bands, was steadily moved westward until they finally settled on a reservation in Nebraska in 1865. Meanwhile, the more northerly bands in west central Wisconsin opposed the treaty of 1837 by which their lands were sold as fraudulent and hid out to avoid removal. They were allowed to take up homesteads in Wisconsin in 1874 and separated administratively from the Nebraska reservation enclave (Lurie 1978:691).

For the Winnebago it was a time of

conflicts and dissensions on the reservation. The Peyote religion, moving up from Oklahoma and introduced among the Nebraska Winnebago by John Rave, could not be readily incorporated into traditional Winnebago ceremonies and beliefs (Radin 1945:35). Arriving with a letter of introduction, Radin was to record "the customs and beliefs" of the tribe. "My first task, of course, was to learn a little of the language and then to take down some texts phonetically. The recording of the texts had some important consequences for my work." There was magic in the air, as if the meeting between Radin and the Winnebago had been predestined. Very few outsiders could speak any Winnebago, and that "a complete stranger like myself should immediately, and without any difficulty, not only pronounce these sounds but be able to write down a whole story and then read it back to them, that partook of the unusual, and seemed to the highly excited imaginations of the peyote-eaters an omen that had to be properly interpreted" (Radin 1945:37). With or without magic, a bond of respect and friendship had been established. Nianājinga ('Stands-on-water'), as the Winnebago named Radin, would come back again and again for the remaining years of his life. The texts he collected, many with secret and sacred contents, had in 1944 grown to some ten thousand pages (Radin 1945:viii).

There is no doubt that the Winnebago reservation became the most important intersection of Radin's intellectual journey in space and time. He received his Ph.D. at Columbia in 1910, worked for the Bureau of American Ethnology in Washington during the following two years, and was involved in a joint Columbia-Harvard project in 1912–13. With his Jewish-American friends Goldenweiser and Lowie, Radin was a central figure in "the American School," giving voice to a new anthropology. Inspired by the scientific rigor and critique of Ernst Mach, an Austrian physicist, mathematician, and historian of science, they set

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¹ In December 1994 the Winnebago Tribe of Wisconsin officially adopted the designation "Ho-Chunk Nation."

about "exorcising the ghosts of tradition raised in the name of reason herself" (Lowie quoted in Deacon 1997: 103). Radin went north in company with Sapir, enlisted by the Geological Survey of Canada. Eventually drifting back across the border, he moved to California in the early twenties. His next destination was Europe. He spent time in Cambridge as well as with Carl Gustav Jung in Zurich. He received an appointment at the University of Michigan in 1925, but headed back to California and Berkeley a couple of years later. For a while it seemed as if the drifter within him had finally been laid to rest, as years passed and Radin stayed in Berkeley. He retired in 1949, at the age of sixty-six. "Retirement" did not, however, provide an easy and quiet life. On the contrary, Radin was as active and uneasy as ever. He took his silvercane and made a grand tour of Europe, including Sweden where he visited his friend professor Åke Hultkrantz in Stockholm. Radin was given an honorary position at the multidisciplinary Department for History of Ideas at Brandeis University in New England in 1957, an engagement he enjoyed until his death in New York on 21 February 1959.

Alienation and Mobility

The dates and places listed above provide us with more than a map of Paul Radin's movements in life: They raise the question of how we can understand his obvious restlessness. I will argue that in the tracks of mobility we will find the explanation for his diverse topics of interest, i.e., anthropology, psychology, philosophy, and archaeology, concentrating on various regions such as North America, South America, and Africa. As some kind of an intellectual bohemian, Radin wrote everything from monographs and comparative studies of religion to prose and poetry. As for his intellectual pursuit, dates and places also provide a key to influences of German-Russian intellectualism, Marxist materialism, and Boasian relativism, which can be found in his thinking. These and other impulses resulted in such disparate works as *Primitive Man as Philosopher* (1927), *Primitive Religion* (1937), and *Crashing Thunder: The Autobiography of an American Indian* (1926). Many other projects were started, but left unfinished. At one time Boas complained: "I wish I were through with all the obligations that

Radin has undertaken but not fulfilled" (APS: Boas to Hodge, 3/30/1914).

Finally, we find alienation in his restlessness. It is a well-known fact that he had turned away from the academic establishment, having problems with the daily university routine, his fellow researchers, and the campus prestige system. Comparing the fame of Bronislaw Malinowski with the relative obscurity of Finnish ethnologist Rafael Karsten, I have elsewhere stressed the importance of institutional affiliation (Lindberg 1995). Although part of an intellectual circle, our anthropological trickster remained Dr. Radin of New York for quite some time. In a letter to Franz Boas in 1912, Alexander Goldenweiser wrote that he felt very sorry for Radin. "Have you heard of any possible openings for him? If there are any, I think he deserves the warmest recommendation notwithstanding his well-known 'faults'" (APS: Goldenweiser to Boas, 2/18/1912).

Commenting on his young students, Boas portrayed Sapir as by far the most brilliant. Lowie, he said, had good critical judgment, but was not particularly creative and lacked originality. He would become a valuable contributor, but "I do not expect him to become a great leader" (APS: Boas to Hodge, 4/29/1909). "Mr. Alexander Goldenweiser is a man of great ability. ... He is completing now his thesis on totemism, which I believe will be a very important advance in our understanding of this intricate subject" (APS: Boas to Hodge, 2/7/1910). As for his very first student, Alfred Kroeber, Boas found him "very much given to pronounce definite judgement on questions rather hastily, but his work is always conscientious, and he never hesitates to correct himself" (APS: Boas to Fewkes, 10/11/1918). Many years later the differences between Kroeber and Boas became very evident when the latter wrote: "In a conversation Dr. Kroeber admitted that I wanted a high degree of probability for a conclusion, while he was satisfied with much less. That is an Epicurean position, not that of a modern scientist" (Boas 1940:307).

As for Radin, Boas never held him in high esteem. "It has always seemed to me that there is a certain vagueness and indecision in his method of work, but I may have done him an injustice, for the results of his Winnebago work are very good. He has shown great industry, persistence, and ability to grasp essential points" (APS: Boas to Hodge, 2/7/1910). As a matter of fact, Boas had discouraged Frederick

Webb Hodge, head of the Bureau of American Ethnology, from financing Radin's fieldwork among the Winnebago, not feeling "sufficiently certain that he would bring results" (APS: Boas to Hodge, 2/7/1910). This move of Boas forced Radin to spend a considerable part of his own money upon fieldwork. He did eventually get support, only to be separated from the Bureau "on account of deliberate falsification of his accounts" (APS: Hodge to Boas, 1/6/1912). Hodge repeated his grave accusation in a letter to Sapir, claiming that Radin had been committing a "deliberate act of perjury" (CMC: Hodge to Sapir 1/7/1912). In addition, Radin was accused of abusing Hodge and the Bureau (APS: Hodge to Boas, 1/6/1912). This incident came as a surprise to most people in Radin's surroundings. Sapir wrote that although his "general conduct is rather informal in character ... I have always admired his enthusiasm and been greatly impressed by the extent and character of his work" (CMC: Sapir to Hodge, 1/12/1912). Looking into the matter, "the falsification of accounts" proved to be a mere "technicality," and Lowie stated (to Boas, 1/2/1912, APS) that "I consider Hodge's conduct at least ungenerous." In a letter of defense to Boas, Radin claimed that "... a few of the older members of the Bureau told me, that in their opinion the main reason for Hodge's attitude lay in a certain hostility he entertained against your pupils" (APS: Radin to Boas, 1/15/1912).

A confrontation between Radin and Boas was unavoidable in the long run. It is obvious that Boas felt uncomfortable whenever Radin was around. Livingston Farrand, trying to persuade him to participate in a conference, remarked that "I do not think there is any danger of Radin's being able to do anything embarrassing" (APS: Farrand to Boas, 4/13/1915). Contrary to the other Boasians, Radin also dared to criticize Boas publicly at an early stage of his career. In 1929, after a bitter correspondence in the *American Anthropologist*, Boas proclaimed that Radin was untruthful, "which of course is nothing unusual in his case" (APS: Boas to Lowie, 10/4/1929). From the opposite point of view it is quite easy to understand Radin's frustration. Boas managed (often in cooperation with Frederick Ward Putnam) to offer positions to Kroeber and Lowie at Berkeley, placing Sapir in Canada, John Swanton with the Bureau of American Ethnology, and Ronald Dixon and others at Columbia. In a

similar way he assisted Ruth Benedict, Margaret Mead, and Elsie Clews Parsons to find fieldwork opportunities. Radin (and to some extent Clark Wissler of the Museum of Natural History of New York) was left out in the cold.² Disappointed, Radin confronted Boas in a letter dated 7 January 1915 (APS): "Your strong personal dislike for me ... has led you to seriously impair my chances for advancement." In an undated reply Boas said that it was "... another one of your performances that are bound to destroy your scientific usefulness. I assume that I have not received this letter."

Without judging either Boas or Radin morally, it is clear that a constant neglect of formalities made Radin a persona non grata. To the "trickster-like" traits of his character belonged both softness and aggression. He expressed a naive frankness in opinions, and many people found him offensive. Controversial as well was his political position that can be summarized as that of an ultra-radical anarchist. His temperament constantly shifted from enthusiasm to depression. During one of his bad periods he was thinking about giving up anthropology for good, making his exit by a forthcoming trip to England. "As you know, I have a large number of manuscripts on the Winnebago, the Ojibwa and the Zapotecs and I don't know what to do with them. Can you make any use of them? I do not feel that I really care to waste the time working them up. ... I am not in the least bit interested in the subject of ethnography itself any longer" (APS: Radin to Boas 10/20/1920). But Radin did return to anthropology and wrote some of his most outstanding contributions in the 1920s and 1930s. The other side of Radin's personality shows a man who got along very well with people, even managing to make himself notably popular. Hence it is not surprising to meet people today who remember him as a quite unpleasant man, as well as people who speak of him as a highly sensitive, nice, and gentle person. Both in thought and appearance, Paul Radin was indeed a very complex man. Sometimes brilliant, at other times a genius hard to understand. Discussing Jung's theory of psychological types, Sapir described him "as a sensation-extravert" (Darnell 1986:159).

² Boas broke with Wissler in good part after leaving the museum in 1905.

The Winnebago

"I have set my heart upon studying the Ojibwa on the one hand and the Oto, Iowa, on the other in connection with my Winnebago studies," Radin informed Boas (APS: Radin to Boas 2/1/1912). He had visited the Chippewa/Ojibwa reservation at Sarnia on Lake Huron and collected a large body of text material. Continuing his work for Sapir and the Geological Survey of Canada, Radin made numerous field trips during the following summer. Sarnia was revisited and from there he proceeded to Kettle Point, Walpole Island, Rice Lake, Chemung Lake, Garden River, Manitoulin Island, North Bay, Rama, Snake and Georgina Islands in Lake Simcoe, and the Chippewas on the Thames. The themes of research covered social organization, religion, and mythology with most of the material obtained in text form, i.e., recordings in the Native language translated into English (CMC: Sapir to Hodge, 3/15/1913). In addition to the Ojibwa, the Geological Survey included Wyandot, Iroquois, and Malecite ethnology through coordinated fieldwork by C. M. Barbeau, F. W. Waugh, W. H. Mechling, and Alexander Goldenweiser.

Radin eventually completed his Winnebago study based upon fieldwork sessions from 1908 to 1913. The *Winnebago Tribe* is one of the most remarkable monographs ever written about Native Americans. Upon reading parts of the manuscript, completed in 1916 but not published by the Bureau of American Ethnology until 1923, Goldenweiser stated that "... in my opinion his contribution to Winnebago ethnology will be the best monograph ever written about an American tribe, in volume, character of material, and abundance of points of theoretical interest" (APS: Goldenweiser to Boas, 2/18/1912). Already in the 1910s, Radin stood for a methodological sensitivity that few of his American colleagues could match, and certainly none in the contemporary British school of anthropology. Working with key informants, notably Jasper and Sam Blowsnake (Sam Carley) and John Rave, Radin, as usual, collected information in text form. With information written down by Winnebago informants in a syllabic alphabet borrowed from the Sauk and Fox, Radin produced phonetic transcriptions that were finally translated into English by his interpreter Oliver Lamere. By presenting lengthy extracts from his texts, Radin was able to produce a

monograph where the Winnebago presented information in their own way: "It has been the aim of the author to separate as definitely as possible his own comments from the actual data obtained, and for that reason every chapter, with the exception of those on history, archaeology, and material culture, is divided into two parts, a discussion of the data and the data itself" (Radin 1923:XV).

This way of presenting and looking at facts was, of course, in the Boasian tradition of a keen separation of Native "facts" from the interpretations of a White scholar. "It is principally the raw material that is presented here. Throughout the work, the Indian has been allowed to tell the facts in his own way. For that reason no attempt has been made to change the English, except when it was ungrammatical or unintelligible. This will explain the simple and at times poor English of the accounts," Radin (1923:XV) wrote in the preface to *The Winnebago Tribe*. With this attitude toward his data it is understandable that he became terribly upset when Hodge demanded that he should make editorial changes (APS: Radin to Boas, 2/23/1912). A large mass of ritualistic material in text form could not be included in the monograph, and Sapir tried to persuade Hodge to allow publication by the Geological Bureau of Canada (CMC: Sapir to Hodge, 5/9/1914). Radin refused to have anything more to do with the Bureau of American Ethnology. The text-based information provided more than merely a basic separation of objectivity and subjectivity. Radin had a different idea of what anthropology should be: "... the ethnographer must provide readers with the original texts, the materials from which he or she makes observations" (Bernard 1994:170). By comparing statements of informants belonging to different social groups or clans, it soon became clear that their own recollections of the same cultural events differed. Such a pattern of individualities was also (surprisingly) revealed as soon as two or more informants from the same clan provided accounts of a common experience. Suddenly, "objective" cultural facts proved to be "subjective" individual experiences. For Radin it meant two things, first that culture could not be regarded as a homogeneous entity, and secondly that in order to get a thorough knowledge of culture and history, one one has to study individuals as creative cultural actors. Thus Radin's first field experience provides us with the key to

early studies such as "Personal Reminiscences of a Winnebago Indian" (1913) and *The Autobiography of a Winnebago Indian* (1920), as well as some unusual chapter headings such as "The Role of the Religious Formulator" (*Primitive Religion*, 1937) or "The Man of Action and the Thinker" and "The Religious and the Non-Religious Man" (*The World of Primitive Man*, 1953) in his later comparative studies. (For most if not all of his colleagues it was simply impossible to speak of members of a traditional society as "non-religious."³) This point of view made him an outsider far away from the mainstream of anthropology in the U.S. or elsewhere. Naturally, it was a position that colored his view of ethnology in general, his conception of history and culture, and his efforts to balance out idealism and materialism.

A Study in American Indian Mythology: The Trickster

The Winnebago name Wakdjunkaga (a word of unknown etymology) means "trickster" or "cunning one." The trickster is a mythological being with many faces, who gives a concrete form to the principle of ambivalence. Coyote, Raven, Mink, Hare, Blue-Jay, Crow, Rabbit, Spider, Raccoon, Opossum, and many others who are anthropomorphic have been identified as tricksters, a term deriving from Daniel G. Brinton's 1885 article "The Hero-God of the Algonkins as a Cheat and Liar" (Gill and Sullivan 1992:308). Brinton, like Henry Rowe Schoolcraft before him, saw in the trickster a mainly religious figure—a degenerated form of the highest divinity. With Boas, however, the trickster was taken out of its religious context. By viewing the trickster as a joker and caricature of man with a strong libido, Boas set the frame for later anthropological and folkloristic interpretations in North America (Hultkrantz 1997:8–9).

Radin discusses the Winnebago trickster-cycle in connection with Raven of the Northwest and the Assiniboine Sitconski (alternatively Dakota Siouan Inkummi or Inktomi). He furthermore points toward the folk tales of the Greeks: "Prometheus has affinities with the trickster because the cunning he practises on Zeus overreaches itself and turns into stupidity, personified by his own brother, Epi-

metheus" (Radin 1956:180). Stressing the universality of the trickster complex and outlining parallels in Tlingit, Blackfoot, and Assiniboine mythology, it is somewhat surprising that Radin did not extend his discussion to the Fox and other trickster characters in South American Indian mythology, a field that he obviously knew quite well. Introducing the trickster, Radin explains that humor and irony go with everything Trickster does. "Yet it is difficult to say whether the audience is laughing at him, at the tricks he plays on others, or at the implications his behaviour and activities have for them" (Radin 1956:xxiv). He continues: "Is this a speculum mentis wherein is depicted man's struggle with himself and with a world into which he had been thrust without his volition and consent? Is this the answer, or the adumbration of an answer, to questions forced upon him, consciously or unconsciously, since his appearance on earth?" (Radin 1956:xxiv).

Trickster is not able to discern good from bad, yet he is the creator of both. He is cynical, cruel, and unfeeling. He has no set of values either social or moral, and still he provides mankind with cultural norms. He is a genitalized figure with no mission beyond that of satisfying his primary wants, hunger and sex. Trickster is simultaneously the creator and the destroyer, the giver and denier, the one who fools and the one who gets fooled. But the diffuseness of his behavior disappears as gradually as "... he emerges with the physical outlines of man" (Radin 1953:313). For Radin he symbolized the oldest expression of mankind, a tale of the subhuman and the superhuman still to be found in its archaic form in the American Indian mythology. He extended Franz Boas's earlier interpretation of the anomalous and contradictory transformer as reflecting a stage of development where these character traits were not separated (Boas 1940:474).

Four years after the original publication of *Winnebago Hero Cycles*, Radin revisited the problem "with drastic changes and in a different perspective" in *The World of Primitive Man* (1953), a book completed in Lugano, Switzerland. This time he stressed the satire on man and the critique of Winnebago society involved in the amazing narrative. The trickster cycle served as a mechanism for expressing all the irritations, dissatisfactions, the maladjustments, in short, the negativism and frustrations of Winnebago society. "Their societal organization

put many restraints on its members. The main prestige value for men, war, and a none too great economic security, produced many crises, internal and external. The ideological superstructure, in addition, possessed a basic contradiction which had to be somehow resolved." Trickster was, of course, symbolic. He resolved nothing, "... except in so far as he demonstrated what happens when man's instinctual side is given free reign" (Radin 1953:338). Assembling all the loose ends, Radin defined "the problem" as basically a "psychological one" in a final treatment of the subject a few years later. "In fact, only if we view it as primary, such as an attempt by man to solve his problems inward and outward, does the figure of Trickster become intelligible and meaningful" (Radin 1956:xxiv). In an appendix to *The Trickster*, Jung interpreted the phenomenon as "a 'psychologem,' an archetypal psychic structure of extreme antiquity." Thus it was a manifestation of "an absolutely undifferentiated human consciousness, corresponding to a psyche that has hardly left the animal level" (Radin 1956:200). For Karl Kerényi the function of Trickster was "to add disorder to order and so make a whole, to render possible, within the fixed bounds of what is permitted, an experiment of what is not permitted" (Radin 1956:185).

Much later a Freudian explanation has been developed by Michael Carroll (1981). According to Freud, human beings desire both sexual satisfaction and the development of civilization. This is exactly, says Carroll, the dilemma of conflicting desires that these myths address. Expanding Radin's original attention to the difference between the religious views of common people and those of religious specialists, Mac L. Ricketts argues that "... the trickster mythology reflects an alternative religious form held by common people, a godless humanism, a worldly religion, a religion of laughter that celebrates human capabilities and responds to the gods by challenging them" (Gill and Sullivan 1992:309). Yet other theories have focused upon the distinction between "true" and "false" stories or the function in trickster mythology as notions of change and self-reflection. Accordingly, Sam Gill and Irene Sullivan conclude that the trickster can be made to fit any existing body of culture theory and add that Radin with Wakdjunkaga presented a rather atypical story cycle (Gill and Sullivan 1992:310–311). Thus the world of sci-

³ The concept of the religious and non-religious man was an idea also explored by Sapir at various points of his career.

ence comes close to the world of mythology as Radin captured it in his conclusion: No generation really understands him, but no generation can do without him. "If we laugh at him, he grins at us. What happens to him happens to us" (Radin 1956:169).

Obtaining the Data:

Fieldwork, Intensive Study, or a Give-and-Take Situation?

Leaving contradictory interpretations behind, we can confidently conclude that *The Trickster: A Study in American Indian Mythology* has taken a prominent position in studies of religion and mythology. Looking at the information given by Radin about the stories and the people who tell them, *The Trickster* takes us even further. The Winnebago myth (*Trickster*, part one) was obtained by one of his principal informants, Sam Blowsnake, in 1912 from an old Winnebago living near the village of Winnebago, Nebraska. The Blowsnakes—Jasper, Sam, and their elderly father—were full-blood Winnebagos belonging to the Thunder clan. "That the elder Blowsnake knew the Trickster myth is unquestioned. This does not mean, however, that he would narrate it, even to his children, unless, traditionally, he had the right to do so." As the old man apparently didn't have such a right, Radin used Sam Blowsnake to approach an older individual who did know the story. His identity remained a secret as it was inadvisable for Radin to ask. It was a sacred myth and "... I was a stranger and a white man" (Radin 1956:111). From these and other passages in Radin's writings, we may note his concern regarding authenticity and, furthermore, why he came to stress distinctions between religious specialists and laymen, sacred and profane stories, and the knowing of a story and the right of telling it.

Paul Radin commenced his ethnographical sojourn on the Nebraska reservation in a time of turmoil. The "really old days" were long gone. As Lurie (1978:696) puts it: "In ethnographic terms much of 'traditional' Winnebago culture is the culture of the fur trade period, and while the term traditional suggests a predictable, established way of life, this was an era of revitalization and renewed optimism after the Winnebago's overwhelming defeats [against the Illinois and their allies] in the first half of the seventeenth century." Thus "traditional" Winnebago culture was, as a mat-

ter of fact, a result of colonialism and global European conflicts incorporating intertribal warfare. Drawing on Winnebago history supplemented by his firsthand information on social organization, Radin (1948:5) concluded that the tribe derived from a society that had been stratified. His mass of data showed that the Winnebago had "exogamous moieties that regulated marriage, the differentiation of leadership roles and functions, and the selection of lacrosse teams. There were twelve patrilineal clans unevenly divided between the moieties. The origin story of each clan underlay that clan's list of personal names, obligations, prerogatives, taboos, reciprocal relationships regarding other clans, duties to the tribe as a whole" (Lurie 1978:694). Functions of war and peace were grouped on one side, while those relating to the policing and regulation of the hunt belonged to the other side of the twofold division (Radin 1923:135). But even if the "old days" were gone, one could still find traces in the memories of the old folks. "The Winnebago social organization has long since broken down, but its details are still so well preserved in the minds of the older men, and particularly in the literature of the tribe, that no difficulty was experienced in reconstructing it" (Radin 1923:136). Thus Radin explained anomalies in the data as recent exceptions due to cultural deterioration. On the reservation log houses had replaced the wigwam and were in turn replaced by frame farm houses. As an island in a vast sea, the reservation was surrounded by White farmers and even connected to Sioux City in Iowa by railroad tracks. The Winnebago residing in Wisconsin were more independent (and more traditional), but still victims of displacements (the last major removal took place in 1874). Geographical confinement, breakdowns in the social system, and changes in subsistence patterns were the results of a reservation system forced upon the Winnebago and other Indian tribes by U.S. Indian policy. The establishment of a Dutch Reformed Church mission in 1908 immediately led to factions within the Nebraska community.

Nianājinga developed his own style of fieldwork. It was fieldwork in the sense that Radin stayed on the reservation for extended periods of research (usually during the summer months). It was also fieldwork in the Boasian sense of using key informants and learning the language of the Natives. As already stated, most

data were gathered in text form, again fitting well into the Boasian school of ethnographic research. Collaboration with educated Indians (or mixed-bloods) was the usual way of working, a tradition dating back to the early days of the Bureau of American Ethnology (BAE). If anything can motivate the old English and Scandinavian notion of "intensive studies in limited areas," it must be Radin's lifelong Winnebago studies and the works of Curt (Unkel) Nimuendajú in South America. It does not seem, however, that Radin ever tried to "go native" in the manner of Frank Hamilton Cushing at Zuni or, for that matter, of Nimuendajú. Personally, I would even hesitate to label him as a "participant observer" in a general Malinowskian sense. He evidently succeeded in establishing fruitful social relations with his Winnebago informants, probably a much more easy task for him than the caretaking of academic relations. It appears, however, that Radin limited his "participation" to that of a collector and observer of ethnographic situations, a scientist trying to provide an intimate (inside) picture of a foreign way of life. Perhaps we can say that Radin came very close to what Clifford Geertz (1973) later proclaimed as "writing culture." He was the observer, collector, and writer of the words spoken by informants in a give-and-take situation. In view of recent discussions concerning ethnographical authority and early anthropology as a tool of imperialism, one has to ask the question of who was fooling whom?

Native religion and ceremonies, the main focus of Radin's research, has always been a field of intensive debate concerning approaches, concepts, and interpretations. Occasionally he was very harsh in his critical judgment, as for instance in his remarks on Father Schmidt's "essentially theological" *The Origin of the Idea of God*. The five-(and ultimately twelve-) volume work was, according to Radin, an "uncritical thesaurus of our subject and a contribution to Catholic dogmatics" (Radin 1937: 254). Stern critics of his own theoretical standpoint, such as Evans-Pritchard (1965:38-39), have pointed out that any attempt to define religion in terms of experience or feeling is vague and highly problematic. From the opposite viewpoint, the phenomenological perspectives of Rudolph Otto and Mircea Eliade, Radin's notion of power and economics embedded in religion will always be put into question. For phenomenologists, religion "... can be

understood only in its own terms, and its essence can be ascertained only by intuition" (Morris 1994:175). As we have seen, Radin's intellectual trajectory, his field experience, and his fieldwork style could never lead him to such an approach.

Much more offensive than the ever-present scholarly criticism, however, was the resentment against him held by highly conservative Wisconsin Winnebagoes for having published information about tribal religion. To quote Lurie (1988:550): "Radin had been downright devious in obtaining ... sacred data. He explained candidly that there were old men in Nebraska who would not speak with him. Since it was vital to anthropology that their knowledge of myth and legend not die with them, he got their young kinsmen into his debts by gifts and favors. The payoff he wanted and got was the old men's stories." Such was the case with the obtaining of the Origin Myth of the World, the most sacred of all the myths in the tribe.

It was Oliver Lamere's father, a blind old man, who made it possible to secure an account of the secret Medicine Rite. A meeting was set up with three of the elders who knew the Medicine Rite and consequently the origin myth. It was in the summer of 1908, Radin's very first season among the Winnebago, that the recording of the famous myth took place under very dramatic circumstances. It could not be done on the reservation, so the party agreed to go to Sioux City, Iowa, some twenty-five miles away. As soon as they arrived, Radin and the three older men took rooms at the top floor of a little hotel. It was early in the evening, but the Indians refused to make their preparations until eleven-thirty:

"Then we all went to the room occupied by the Indians. Great care was taken to see there were no unwanted Indians about. When everyone was satisfied on that score the windows were firmly closed, the shades pulled down and the shutters fastened securely. The door was then locked and bolted. There was no interpreter, in fact no one who knew any English. The question of an interpreter had not even come up and it is very difficult for me to decide whether they thought I knew enough Winnebago to understand what was being said or whether they realized that I would at some future time read the account I had received in Winnebago to my interpreter, Oliver Lamere, who would then translate it for me. Precisely at midnight one of

the three began the story. When it was about half finished, a second one continued it to the end. The third person said nothing except when some special point was discussed during the pauses. It had been agreed that, although they would not repeat anything, they would speak reasonably slowly so that I would have ample time to write down everything. The narration, including the interruptions, took five hours in all" (Radin 1945: 38-39).

Radin had to go back to New York immediately which was rather fortunate, as time was thereby allowed for some of the antagonism towards my work to abate before I returned the following summer. News traveled fast on the reservation, and in spite of all precautionary measures people knew about the gathering in Sioux City the very next day. Radin was right, however. Stirred-up feelings had calmed when he returned the next summer, and he was instead introduced to his future key informant Jasper Blow-snake, who agreed to narrate the entire Medicine Rite (Radin 1945:40-41). Performed by medicine men upon the initiation of a member to their sacred society, the rite recapitulated the mythic origins and heroes of the tribe. Radin possessed secret and sacred data pertaining to life, death, and rebirth of man and society. He waited some thirty-five years before publishing it as *The Road of Life and Death: A Ritual Drama of the American Indians* (1945).

As we can see, the situation was far more complex than the usual outlining of "ethnographic authority." As Lurie suggests, it is quite possible that it was the Winnebago who used Radin, not the other way around. Everybody made "a good buck," as Radin had to pay twice, first to the young man who introduced him and then to the old man for his story. Apart from the pragmatics of everyday life, the situation also contained the consciousness of passing on a cultural heritage. "Salvage ethnography" is generally viewed from our perspective in the anthropological discourse, hardly ever in the eyes of the Other. Lurie suggests, and I think she is right, that the elders among the Winnebago were looking for someone to preserve their cultural heritage in a period of change and instability. Days with new ways of living were becoming a reality, and old knowledge was soon to be lost. It was into an "atmosphere of conflicts and dissensions" that the ethnographer

stepped (Radin 1945:36). They chose Radin, as much as he chose the Winnebago. Not everybody, however, particularly not the less pressured Wisconsin Winnebago, could consent to making sacred knowledge public, but most Nebraska traditionalists did.

Man, Culture, and Society

The thinking and writings of Paul Radin took many unsuspected, sometimes even paradoxical turns and shifts. But his comprehension of society as an entity of individuals and accordingly of culture as an abstraction of individual actions and ideas are a thread running through all of his works. By regarding any myth as a drama in which the storyteller has the liberty to alter, to add, or to disregard details to the storyline, he could stress the importance of studying the narrator, his temperament, personality, and literary talents. For Radin primitive man was a man of reason and rationality (see, e.g., his famous critique of Lucien Lévy-Bruhl's *Les fonctions mentales dans les sociétés inférieures*). By regarding religion as the human struggle to control external powers, he again could stress the individuality in primitive society, i.e., taking into account the differences between men of action and men of thinking as well as religious and non-religious persons. To control gods or spirits was real power and a manifestation of human agencies. This view, in accordance with Radin's humanistic Marxism, places the formation of a class structure before the rise of statehood, not the other way around as in Leninistic Marxism. Thus for Radin (as outlined in his discussions concerning the rise of the Maya, Mexican, and Peruvian civilizations) the "state" is only a transformation of an existing power structure. From an evolutionary perspective spiritual power and economic power emerge:

"Where the [economical] profits are greater, the numbers of the contenders for power will, very naturally, also be larger. Alliances consequently will take place between the civil and the religious competitors for control. Classes and castes arise and stratified societies appear. But the struggle for power between individuals or between groups and classes is only one aspect of the new conditions which this greater economic security and stability bring about. With agriculture, there are almost universally associated,

Polynesia and Malaysia excepted, totemic clans and a type of society in which the activities of the individual become subordinated to highly integrated social units with mystical associations" (Radin 1937:56-57).

Later, in *The World of Primitive Man*, Radin again stressed that basic human and economic elements are to be found without exception among all aboriginal tribes: "I realize that to speak of an economic structure basic to all primitive peoples seems on the face of it, preposterous, particularly if we visualize the fundamental differences which exist in the methods of exchange and the types of political organization which have arisen in connection with them" (Radin 1953:105).

All aboriginal peoples accept the theory that every human being has the inalienable right to an irreducible minimum, consisting of adequate food, shelter, and clothing. We must, Radin argues, understand society from the point of view of its meaning to its participants. We must divorce our minds completely from the notion that primitive peoples are mentally and emotionally simple and that their demands are modest (Radin 1953:106-107). Moving from a micro- to a macro-perspective, from individuals to societies, Radin does not lose himself into a notion of anonymous power structures; both spiritual and economic authority are concrete, in the hands of rational individuals, which makes them the determining forces in the struggle between cultural continuity and change. In a comprehensive introduction to the reprint of Radin's *The Method and Theory of Ethnology*, Arthur J. Vidich states: "To know the primitive world requires that the anthropologists be wholly aware of the historical context and the personal factors relevant to every observation he makes before he can be sure of its significance" (Radin 1933[1966]:xiv). In other words, history is the result of concrete events and individual actions.

Time after time Radin returned to the distinction between men of action and men of thought. Equally permanent was his attempt to understand society from the point of view of its meaning to its participants. Throughout his lifetime he studied the Winnebago and thus never assumed a final attitude toward his data. The more he learned from them, the more he changed his view on primitive society and anthropology in general. With this deep knowledge grounded in years of fieldwork he got the "capacity to project himself into and interpret primitive

societies which he knew only through the work of others" (Radin 1933 [1966]: xix).

Moving between macro- and micro-interpretations of cultural history, Radin obviously tried to keep his methodological rigor. Still we can find unpredictable "trickster" traits in his writing. It is puzzling to know that without really acknowledging it he merged the Blowsnake brothers into a "fictional" *Crashing Thunder* in *Crashing Thunder: The Autobiography of an American Indian*. The story behind this book of 1926 began thirteen years earlier when Radin published "Personal Reminiscences of a Winnebago Indian" in the *Journal of American Folklore*. The subject was Jasper Blowsnake or Warudjāxega, a name translated as 'terrible thunder-crash.' In 1920 Radin published a second Winnebago autobiography, this time the lifestory of Sam Blowsnake, Jasper's younger brother. Both of these stories were intended to throw "light upon the workings of an Indian's brain" and give the reader an "inside view of the Indian's emotional life" (Radin 1913: 293). Following the second biography, Radin wrote a fictional account called "Thunder-Cloud, a Winnebago Shaman, Relates and Prays" for Elsie Clews Parsons's *American Indian Life*. Parsons convinced Kroeber (Radin was enthusiastic) that a series of popular articles would be the best way to educate the public about Indian life and culture. Again, as Kroeber pointed out in his introduction, it was an attempt and an experiment in publicity to describe the mental life of Native people (Deacon 1997:237). Radin's contribution was a merging of "terrible thunder-crash" from the 1913 autobiography, Jasper Blowsnake's recollections of his vision quest in *The Winnebago Tribe*, and various information given by Sam Blowsnake (and possibly their father). The result was a monologue, fictitious for sure, but beyond anything by James Fenimore Cooper or Karl May. It was Indian life, real life, and not a Paleface fancy.

Crashing Thunder: The Autobiography of an American Indian appears to be the life history of Sam Blowsnake, not his older brother, the "real" *Crashing Thunder*. One finds, however, substantial differences between the 1920 autobiography and *Crashing Thunder* (see the foreword and appendix by Arnold Krupat to the University of Nebraska Press reprint of 1983). The original ninety-two pages have been expanded to more than 200. The footnotes have been considerably re-

duced (to less than one tenth of the original 350). Major changes are also to be found in the arrangement of the text, translations, syntax, and diction. Thus the "facts" as "told by an Indian" have been given a very different form in Radin's later version of Sam Blowsnake's life story.

These and other changes actualize the problem of how we shall understand and interpret the story of *Crashing Thunder*. Ruth Underhill once said that it was Radin the artist, rather than the ethnologist behind the pen. Langness (1965:7), however, pronounced it a masterpiece, "the beginning of truly rigorous work in the field of biography by professional anthropologists." Enjoying the double position of being both an artist and a scientist should not be conflated with the single position of being an artistic scientist. Radin wrote prose and poetry apart from his ethnological writings.⁴ But sometimes he combined his skills as, for example, in his editing and translation of "primitive philosophies." The Native songs and poems he presented in *Primitive Man as Philosopher* required not only a translation, but also a poetic rewriting in order to make them understandable to his readers. Furthermore, Radin never saw anthropology as a *science* of man or culture. He was writing and interpreting culture, i.e., forwarding his Indian informants' view of the world.

Is *Crashing Thunder* the result of artistry, confusion, or mistakes? It is possible that Radin had problems keeping Sam and Jasper apart. As Krupat points out, confusions and overlapping occur in Radin's various presentations of the Blowsnake brothers. Perhaps he made a mistake when he assigned the fasting experience to Jasper in the *Winnebago Tribe* and later corrected it in *The Autobiography*. The original intention of Radin's periods of fieldwork of 1908-13 was to collect material for his monograph, not recording life stories.⁵ The biographies and autobiographies that followed were the continuity of ends and means. Hence it is quite obvious that

⁴ Radin was not the only poet and literary writer among the early Boasians. Sapir and Benedict were, of course, the most notable.

⁵ Lurie (personal communication) states, however, that Sam Blowsnake wrote his autobiography in the syllabary script in pencil on an old fashioned school child's pulp paper tablet. Apparently it was not in the papers he gave to APS or no one has recognized the tablet for what it was.

there never was a single recording of Jasper Blowsnake's life story, nor a specific session that allowed Radin to gather all the "facts" about Sam's life. As brothers they shared many experiences in life, listened to their father's stories, and became introduced to religious traditions of their people. Working as key informants for Radin, they told him their personal reminiscences as individuals and as members of the Winnebago tribe. Years later Radin approached their lives from the opposite direction, and out of his Winnebago text he was able to edit the lives of Sam and Jasper Blowsnake. Thus, probably more by editing than by artistry, *Crashing Thunder* became a complete Winnebago, rather than the "real one."

Anthropology Is Not the Science of Culture

Paul Radin put forward his general view on anthropology in *The Method and Theory of Ethnology* and to some extent in *Primitive Man as Philosopher*. This is not the place, however, to treat this subject in detail. Thus I will just give some concluding remarks regarding the implications of Radin's deeply liberated intellect enforced by his field experiences among the Winnebago. As already pointed out, his understanding of society and history differed radically from the Boasian mainstream. For Radin society was a cluster of individuals, culture not a key concept, but an abstraction of individual ideas, and history the description of a period with specific events. Individuals in society shared a field of experience (history and traditions) and ideas that were taken as self-evident, although in their real nature the result of existing power relations. "It is only when a culture is breaking down, that is, only when crises, cultural and personal, are present that, generally speaking, an individual is prone to become sufficiently objective to examine the presuppositions, particularly the religious and philosophical presuppositions, on which his culture has been built" (Radin 1927:395). Thus Radin's understanding of anthropological phenomena was far from that of Alfred Kroeber, who in his famous article on the "Superorganic" stated that mentality relates to the individual. "The social or cultural, on the other hand is in its very essence non-individual. Civilization, as such, begins only where the individual ends; and who-

ever does not in some measure perceive this fact, though as a brute and rootless one, can find no meaning in civilization, and history for him must be only a wearying jumble, or an opportunity for the exercise of art" (Kroeber 1917:192-193).

Kroeber moved toward structuralistic interpretations of macro-history, while their mutual teacher Franz Boas remained extremely critical of all kinds of (over)generalizations. For Boas data spoke for themselves—an exaggerated distrust of theories, according to Radin. He celebrated Boas's criticism of evolutionists like Tylor and Frazer, but was very critical of what he understood as a confusion of cultural facts with physical facts. In *The Method and Theory of Ethnology* he repeatedly distinguishes between the "historical approach," the actual history of mankind, and the "scientific" or "generalizing method." This can be illustrated by his response to Edward Sapir's *Time Perspective in Aboriginal American Culture*. Sapir (1916:4) writes:

"One of the characteristic traits of history is its emphasis on the individual and personal. While the importance of individual events and personalities for the progress of human affairs is not to be underestimated, the historical reconstructions of the cultural anthropologist can only deal, with comparatively few exceptions, with generalized events and individuals. Instead of speaking, for instance, of the specific influence exerted by a particular shaman of a tribe at an inaccessible period in the past, cultural anthropology will have to lump together a number of such phenomena and generalize as to the influence exerted by the class of shamans at a more or less well defined time and place. Or, if it is a question of the social relations between two tribes, say the Haida and Tsimshian, it may in a number of cases have to content itself with a broad definition of such relations, taking, for instance, the Haida and Tsimshian as such as the units directly involved, though perfectly aware that the actual mechanism of the relation is in every case borne by individuals, house-groups, or clans, that is, by subdivisions of the historical units ostensibly concerned. A great deal of such substitution of the whole for the part is unavoidable in ethnology. These ... limitations must be frankly recognized, but they need not in the slightest obscure the

application of historical methods to the field of cultural anthropology."

Radin's comment on his friend's generalized events or generalized individual reads:

"If I follow Sapir's argument here, he first admits that history deals with specific individuals and events, that in the reconstruction of the history of aboriginal culture it is impossible to obtain the requisite information with regard to these individuals or events, and that therefore we must operate with generalized events and individualities! Since, however, the latter do not properly exist, we must, so to speak, re-endow them with as much reality as we can; and since we cannot give them a qualitative correction, we must give them a quantitative one! In other words, we are asked to devitalize something which we have never known and then to endow this unknown something with a new life and assume that what we have breathed into it is the life it originally possessed. This is certainly a most amazing type of procedure (Radin 1933:55-57).

History could, for example, be found in Erland Nordenskiöld's serial publication *Comparative Ethnographical Studies*, Radin wrote (cf. Lindberg 1996). "Pseudo-history" was the term he used for the works of Kroeber, Sapir, Wissler, Benedict, Mead, and others. In such a manner Radin continued to evaluate his fellow anthropologists. He was certainly cruel toward Margaret Mead, labeling her standard one-year fieldworks as extremely superficial. Furthermore, he regarded her work as essentially un-historical (Lindberg 1996:178-179). Robert Lowie, his best friend, escaped most of it, although Radin could never accept his definition of ethnology as the "science of culture." They were just "studying specific cultures."

Returning to the trickster metaphor, it can be concluded that his friends and associates found him spellbinding as teacher or conversationalist, but sometimes exasperating, particularly since he was oblivious to how he inconvenienced and used people. He never built up a pension for his retirement and lived from temporary appointment to temporary appointment. The uncertainty of his livelihood and impermanence of his living quarters might have contributed to his testiness and perhaps resentment toward his peers and helped him rationalize this as necessary to his survival. He was self-centered and "tricky" but,

unlike Wakdjunkaga, neither greedy, nor a womanizer (although married twice). Paul Radin's intellectual journey resulted in perhaps the most complete and detailed recording of an American Indian tribe. He was empirical in the extreme, built his arguments upon observations, but yet was able to use facts and theory in an effort to learn something of mankind in general. Paul Radin may not have wanted to be remembered as a scientist, but he was a great one.

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JAPANESE CEREMONIES AND FESTIVALS IN CALIFORNIA

EDITED BY PAUL RADIN

PREFATORY NOTE

THE FOLLOWING MATERIAL represents one portion of that collected by Miss N. I. in 1934 while she was working for me on a survey of the customs and beliefs of the Oriental minorities of the San Francisco Bay area, undertaken under the auspices of the SERA of Alameda County. The other parts, dealing respectively with the folktales and the life histories, are to be published in another connection.

All the information was obtained from the older residents of Oakland and Berkeley in Japanese.

The arrangement of the material speaks for itself.

I am responsible for the mapping out of the survey, for the revision of the English text, and the general editing—Paul Radin.

BIRTH CEREMONIES

BIRTH CEREMONIES IN JAPAN

Since boys alone can perpetuate the family name and inherit titles and estates they are considered of more importance in Japan than girls. Yet, in Japan, the birth of a child whether it be a boy or a girl is the cause of much rejoicing. A special messenger bears the glad tidings to all relatives and intimate friends and formal announcements are sent to close relatives. All the people thus notified are obliged to make early calls, to welcome the baby into the world, and must bring with them some gift together with fish and eggs for good luck. It is customary in Japan to have all presents wrapped in white paper and to have some words written on it. The gifts likewise must be tied with a red and white paper string under which is inserted the noshi, a bit of dried fish, folded in a piece of colored paper.

Before the seventh day the baby is named, usually by the father or head of the family, although a friend or patron of the family may also be asked to do it. In Japan, the name of a living member of the family or that of a friend is rarely given to a child. Names of beautiful objects in nature such as Flower, Plum, Snow are bestowed upon girls, and Tiger and similar appellations suggesting manly qualities, given to the boys. However, the choice of a name for the child does not play the important role in Japan that it does in America. Often, a boy

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